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Security Council

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Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 7409th meeting of the Security Council, held on 19 March 2015, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has been briefed by the Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag and the Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet following the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). The Security Council expresses its appreciation for the work of Derek Plumbly as the Special Coordinator from 2012 to 2014 and welcomes the appointment and initial efforts of Sigrid Kaag as the new Special Coordinator.

"The Security Council recalls all its previous resolutions and the statements of its President on the situation in Lebanon. The Security Council reaffirms its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon.

"The Security Council expresses its deep concern following the recent incidents which occurred across the Blue Line and in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon's (UNIFIL) area of operations. The Security Council stresses that such violence and the presence of unauthorized weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations violates resolution 1701 and the cessation of hostilities. It underlines the risk that such events could lead to a new conflict that none of the parties or the region can afford. It urges all parties to make every effort to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is sustained, exercise maximum calm and restraint and refrain from any action or rhetoric that could jeopardize the cessation of hostilities or destabilize the region.

"The Council recalls its press statement on Lebanon of February 4. The Council urges all parties to abide scrupulously by their obligation to respect the safety of UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel and to ensure that the freedom of movement of UNIFIL is fully respected and unimpeded, in conformity with its mandate and rules of engagement.

"The Security Council urges all parties to make every effort to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is sustained, and emphasizes the need for them to continue working with the Special Coordinator and UNIFIL, including through the tripartite mechanism, to continue working in the ongoing process to delineate and mark the Blue Line in its entirety, to focus again on the goal

of a permanent ceasefire and to reflect positively on ways forward on all outstanding issues in the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) 1680 (2006), and 1559 (2004) and other relevant Security Council resolutions.

"The Security Council expresses deep concern at all violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and calls on all parties to fully respect Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"The Security Council expresses its concern at the ten-month stalemate in the election of the President of the Republic, which has undermined Lebanon's ability to address the security, economic and social challenges it faces and has jeopardized the normal functioning of Lebanese institutions. The Council urges Lebanese leaders to adhere to Lebanon's Constitution and National Pact and calls on all parties to act responsibly and put Lebanon's stability and national interests ahead of partisan politics and to show the necessary flexibility and sense of urgency to apply mechanisms provided for by the Lebanese Constitution with regard to the election. It calls on the members of Parliament to uphold Lebanon's longstanding democratic tradition and to convene to elect a President without further delay. The Council supports the efforts of Prime Minister Tammam Salam to govern under difficult circumstances and calls on all parties in Lebanon to enable the government to function effectively.

"The Security Council expresses its deep concern at the increasing and negative impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon's stability and the immediate threat to its security. It underscores its concern at the continued cross-border fire and shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon, which has caused death and injury among the Lebanese population, as well as incursions, abductions, and arms trafficking across the Lebanese-Syrian border.

"The Security Council also notes with deep concern all other border violations, including the presence of terrorist and violent extremist groups in Lebanese territory, the deepening involvement of some Lebanese parties in the fighting in Syria and the risks this poses for Lebanon's stability and for the Lebanese people. The Security Council underscores its call on all Lebanese parties to recommit to Lebanon's policy of disassociation and to step back from any involvement in the Syrian crisis, consistent with their commitment in the Ministerial declaration of the current Government and in the Baabda Declaration of 12th of June 2012.

"The Security Council condemns in the strongest terms acts of terrorism, including hostage taking by terrorist and violent extremist groups, including ISIL, also known as Daesh, and Jabhat al Nusra, on Lebanese territory and commends the Lebanese Armed and Security Forces for their commitment and critical role played in preventing and combating terrorism within Lebanon. The Council expresses concern at the rising risk of radicalization across the region and the threat it poses to Lebanon. It also expresses concern at the abduction of Lebanese soldiers by ISIL, also known as Daesh, and Jahbat al Nusra and calls for their immediate release.

"The Security Council encourages all parties in Lebanon to demonstrate renewed unity and determination to resist a slide into violence and conflict and notes with appreciation the messages of moderation made by Lebanon's leaders, including ongoing dialogues and recent calls to defuse sectarian tensions and to develop a national strategy to combat terrorism in Lebanon.

"The Security Council welcomes the crucial role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and security forces in extending and sustaining the authority of the State and responding to new security challenges. The Council further welcomes the strong international commitment to support the LAF through its Capabilities Development Plan, including the agreement for the $3 billion of assistance provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in cooperation with France and the additional $1 billion pledged by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2014, the more than $1 billion in security assistance by the United States since 2006, and the support from other Member States which has helped strengthen the capability of the LAF to provide security for Lebanon. It also urges the additional and expedited assistance in areas where the LAF is most critically in need of support, including counter-terrorism and border protection. It calls on Lebanon's leaders and Lebanese of all communities to offer support to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

"The Security Council also stresses the need to support the Lebanese security and judicial authorities to combat impunity. It welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) and recalls the need to put an end to impunity in Lebanon for the long-term stability and security of Lebanon. The Council urges the Lebanese authorities to continue meeting their international obligations in this regard, including on financial matters and also urges Member States to provide voluntary contributions as necessary. The Council calls upon all parties to fully cooperate with the Tribunal.

"The Security Council is gravely concerned by the impact of hosting over 1,180,000 Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, which represents more refugees in proportion to Lebanon's national population than any other country, and its impact on host communities, on the stability and security of Lebanon and in the wider region. The Council acknowledges the extraordinary challenges Lebanon and the Lebanese people continue to face in this regard and Lebanon's efforts to host, assist and protect those refugees and the importance of upholding human rights and humanitarian principles. It notes the recent decisions of the Government of Lebanon concerning its Syrian refugee policy and encourages the Government to continue working closely with the United Nations, especially the UNHCR, and partners.

"The Security Council underscores that support to Lebanon's efforts to manage the impact of the influx of refugees, including on essential services such as education and health, is crucial to preserving Lebanon's stability and security. The Council urges the international community to urgently disburse existing pledges and meaningfully increase assistance to Lebanon, consistent with the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, in particular at the third International Humanitarian Aid Pledging Conference for Syria to be held in Kuwait on 31 March 2015.

"The Security Council appreciates the work of the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) under the stewardship of the Secretary-General and its role in ensuring strong, coordinated international support for Lebanon to help the country withstand the multiple challenges to its security and stability. The Council urges the ISG to continue its work in coordination with the Special Coordinator and seek opportunities to help address rising challenges to Lebanon's security and stability, including the consequences of regional crises and the impact of hosting millions of refugees."